

Miss Younge in the Character of Louisa.



Poison'd by thee! Thou say'st it but to try me!

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The Fatal Extravagance.

A
T R A G E D Y.

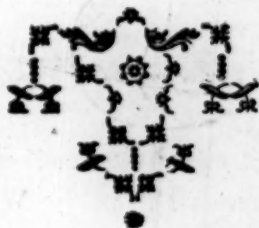
As it is Acted at the

T H E A T R E S - R O Y A L

I N

Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden.

Written by Mr. JOSEPH MITCHELL.



L O N D O N;

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M DCC LXXXI.

PROLOGUE.

Written by AARON HILL, Esq.

WARM'D, by a kindred sense of England's
A Caledonian muse with pity glows; [woes
From ruin'd hopes, a saving moral takes,
And paints th' unhappy, for the happy's sakes.
Scotland's new taste our meaning scene supplies,
And a first sight, on tragick pinions, tries.
Brave, and long fam'd in arms, her warlike race
Have trod the fields of death with dauntless grace!
Fierce, and untir'd, in blood, have nobly dar'd,
And every toil, and every danger, shar'd.
Now, fir'd by rising arts, she grasps the days,
And her old cant, like falling stocks, decoys.
Her long-lost muse new-lights her ancient flame!
And our scene blazes with recover'd fame.

We teach, to-night—ah! wou'd 'twere not too late,
How rash, believing avarice galls a state;
What private sorrows from wild hazards flow,
And how false hope produces certain woe.

This—the most natural business of the stage,
Wit all your generous hearts, its bop'd engage:
None can their pity, for those woes, conceal,
Which most, who hear, perhaps, too deeply feel.
The rants of ruin'd kings, of mighty name,
For pompous misery, small compassion claim.
Empires o'erturn'd, and heroes held in chains,
Alarm the mind, but give the heart no pains.
To ills, remote from our domestic fears,
We lend our wonder, but withhold our tears.

Not so, when, from such passions, as our own,
Some favourite folly's dreadful fate is shown:
There the soul bleeds, for what it feels within;
And conscious pity shakes at suffering sin.

O! give attention, to the moving scene,
And shun what yet may be, by what has been.

EPILOGUE.

By the SAME.

YOU'VE seen the play—and I'll unfold the poet—
To whom—(pray'd sleep, if a pure flock!) we
owe it.

He's a chance-blessing—somewhat fit angelically sung us!
Dropp'd—from the clouds of innocence—among us!

Slipp'd thro' the Kirk's loose pale, we gave him quarters
Poor soul!—He'd like to have been the muse's martyr.
When stage-plays!—and abominations!—took him,
Grace, and the shepherds of the saints, forsook him.
'Twas given, thenceforth, to Satan's power to win him—
—The root of the sound matter—was not in him!
Yet, tho' rebuk'd, full sore—he's no huge sinner:
You'll scarce see one of his pure brethren—thinneer.
Most sanctify'd of face! Troth—I'm afraid,
If his looks lye not—the poor man's a maid!

The bard, not carnal-minded—say the curious,
How come th' unfishy folks to be so furious?
Judge you the quarrel right—w'e'll briefly show it.
—Good plays give good instruction—said the poet.
Vanity! cry'd the brethren—gro'st defilement!
And so, the war broke out, past reconciliation.

Young Bays, provok'd, here, drew his wrathful pen;
Shine forth, said he, my muse, on those dark men;
And prove, by dint of fair example, whether
Much goodness is not learn'd by coming bittar?

But, what he teaches, be to him alone—
I'll teach a secret lesson, of my own.

—Say they, of plays—what men learn nothing by 'em?
—I stand—the stage's redemption—kind deff' m.

Who, that has seen, to-night, baw I, a wife,
Gave counsel, fit to've sav'd my spouse's life,
Learns not this moral, past all contradiction,
That disobedient husbands—meet affliction?
That he's most happy, who, his sisters eases,
And lets his wiser wife—do—what she pleases?

This, for our sex's fame, his play produces—
You see—all doctrines have their hidden uses.
To this—if the bluff brethren preach resistance,
Let 'em, if they love safety, keep their distance.
For, should we catch 'em, in our wrong'd dominion,
Stiff as they are, we'll make 'em change opinion.

Dramatis Personæ.

MEN.

BELIMOUR.
COURTNEY.
BARGAVE.

WOMAN.

LOUISA.

The Fatal Extravagance.

SCENE, Bellmour's House.

Enter Louisa and Courtney.

Louisa. 'T WAS kind! this speed of your return.—But, tell me,

What success had you? Was my father mov'd?
Methinks, I read your news in your sad visage,
And my heart trembles with prophetick fears.

Court. 'Tis as I judg'd 'twould be—His own wants press him;

He sinks beneath your husband's wasteful life,
Those boundless, dicing, and voluptuous riots,
And this last, worst, adventure of lost hope,
Which has, at once, dissolv'd a wealth so fast,
That pity scarce vouchsafes to feel his sufferings!

Louisa. But his late conduct proves my Bellmour
Mistaken; he has instructed him to think. [chang'd:
And thought has captiv'd every madd'ning passion.

Court. Yet early vice, by custom, long inculg'd,
Leaves such impression of habitual ill,
As finds no cure, but from severe remorse,
And time's slow working.

Louisa. Nay, name not: Bellmour's vice—
He has no vice—His very power is lost,
E'en had he taste for follies—Poor and despis'd,
The slaves, for whose curs'd sakes he stands re-
proach'd,

Now shun his converse. Villains, who betray'd him,
Start, when they meet him. Poverty, like his,
Spreads a contagion round it. All mankind
Cry, "Lord have mercy! and fly, frighted from him."

Did you lay open our incumbent ruin?
Ung'd you my father strongly? Want's cold hand
Creeps o'er us, and 'tis now no time for counsel.

Court. I told him all, and mov'd his utmost pity.
Still as he set, to view your husband's failings,
I urg'd his virtues, and bore down the balance;
I prais'd his wit, his courage, his humanity,
His fine frank spirit, and his generous nature:
But 'twas lost hope. Believe, his brother knows him;
What he has done, already, weighs him down,
His struggling will, to save you, has undone him,
And Bellmour's self wou'd there beg aid in vain.

Louisa. O! he was never born to be a beggar!
Heaven is too kind to goodness, to forsake him!
He, whom soft pity melts at other's misery,
Deserves, himself, to live exempt from woe.
Bellmour could ne'er behold a stranger wretched,
But he partook his pain, till he cou'd ease it.
How, then, will he support the weeping anguish
Of three poor children, all undone by him?

Court. His good and ill so chequer out his nature,
That which excels is doubtful. Nobly will'd,
His pitying heart flows out in generous purposes:
But, wanting power to stem the tide of pleasure,
Irresolute he drives, and floats to ruin.
Men must be rigid, and severe, in virtue!
Serious, and noble aims distinguish reason!
To live for taste is not to live at all.

The man of pleasure dreams away his days,

And dies, to be forgotten—Bellmour's soul,
Had contemplation bent it to a bias,
Had given a point to fame's proud pinnacle,
And purpled o'er his name with deathless glory!
Now, it lies lost in dust!—I wou'd 'twere mine,
To screen you from the storm that's gathering round
But I, unblest'd with power, can only wish, [yours
And wonder why the strong have feeble wills.

Louisa. Oh! I shall tremble to behold his face!
His ruin'd family hangs on his heart,
His helpless children's future fate distracts him,
And the once lively Bellmour smiles no more.
Silent, he walks, or stands with folded arms,
And still looks down, as if his soul were earth.
If e'er by chance, his lifted eyes meet mine,
The starting tears glare dreadfully upon me,
And, quivering, struggle, to flow loose, in sorrow.
Then sighs, suppress'd by force, strive hard for
vent, [som.

And heaven, and swell, like earthquakes, in his bo-
Groaning, at length, he breaks in whirlwind from
me,

Torn by ten thousand pangs, raves, reddens, starts,
And frights me with a dreadful burst of passions!
O uncle! what remains for hope to snatch at?
Of all the wide estate, that late enclos'd us,
But this poor house is left us—This too totters,
Soon ruin, with his palsied hand, will seize
This ancient pile, and shake it into dust!
Not thrice the worth of all, that now is ours,
Will save poor Woody from that fatal bond,
He sign'd to serve my Bellmour. All our hope
Was in your friendly journey to my father.
Woody must sink, and Bellmour cannot bear it.
Bellmour will never live to sink a friend!
Look yonder, where, in pensive grief, he walks,
Unhoping, and disconsolate!

Court. Poor Bellmour!
How chang'd, from that wild, noisy, joyful rioter,
Which all his friends have known him! Still ex-
treme!

Enter Bellmour, walking melancholy.

Louisa. My life! my Bellmour! wou'd not thus
my soul,

I have more woes to bear, that are my own,
Than my strength matches—add not thou thy sor-
That would o'erwhelm me quite. [rows

Bell. I pray forgive me.

Prison'd in thought, I could not look about me,
And my soul mis'd thy comfort.—I was musing.

Louisa. What sad reflection held you?

Bell. A mournful wandering!
No matter now.

Louisa. Nay you must tell me.

Bell. I was considering which of my three boys,
Some few years hence, when I'm dissolv'd in death,
Will act the beggar best! run, bare-foot, fastest!
And, with most dexterous thrug, play tricks for
charity!

Louisa. Oh! for Heav'n's sake, forbear, by starts
 like this, *like this!*

To images of horrors, nature shrinks at thought of.

Bell. Why, my Louisa! 'tis a wretch's duty,
 To learn to bear his misery—to know it,
 To use ourselves to poize it, is the means
 To make it easy to us. Yet I'm to blame!
 Thou had'st no share in any guilt of mine;
 I ought alone to suffer. 'Twas too cruel,
 'Twas even unmanly, to afflict thy innocence!

Court. Oh! Sir, you sooth the grief you should
 resist!

As the gross atmosphere is shook by tempests,
 Which never ruffle the superior regions;
 Mean spirits, only, buckle under woe;
 It is the great man's pride to combat fortune,
 And rise against oppression.

Bell. Si, 'tis true—

And, I remember, you have oft advis'd it,
 While I had power, to try my virtue's proof.
 A man may die unhelp'd—but must not hope
 To conquer without arms. Talking of help,
 Will your good brother lend it?—Speaking silence!
 How could I hope it from him?

Court. Yet despair not—

A time may come, when even your woes shall prove
 Great benefits: Firm spirits break misfortunes!
 To suffer well's the noblest way to conquest.
 On a smooth sea, the sailor shews no skill,
 But he displays it all in hurricanes.

Bell. He wou'd not, sure, neglect to save his
 daughter,

Had he the power still left him—yet friends, some-
 Are more than fathers! A father cannot be
 More than a friend!—I had a friend in Woody!
 Once he was happy—what he shall be hereafter,
 He owes to friendless Bellmour! Perish the name!
 To what a stinging death is he reserv'd,
 Who leaves a good man wretched, whom he made
 Sir, it wou'd ease me of a galling pain, [so
 Wou'd you dissolve this disappointed hope
 In Woody's breast. 'Twere sin to nourish it,
 Since 'tis unstable—he must know it soon:
 Let it be told by any tongue but Bellmour's.

Court. I'll visit him this instant.—Do you,
 mean while,
 Bravely seek comfort from a firm belief, [you.
 That Heaven befriends your virtues, and will save
 A hand unseen these clouds of woe may clear,
 And into triumph turn distracting fear.

[Exit Courtney.
Bell. Louisa! I am damn'd, while yet alive!

Louisa. Alas! what mean you to distract me
 With your wild startings? [thus

Bell. Nay, but mark me well—
 Want's the damnation of a living sinner—
 What have I liv'd for, if I die a beggar?
 Why were my ancestors renown'd in war? [bench,
 Why, with grave judges, have they grac'd the
 Or, with wise votes, the senate?—In me must beg-
 Mark that lean word, Louisa!—In me must beg
 That ebbing name, which, through a length of ages,
 Has given a kingdom honour. Bear'st thou that?
 How excellent art thou, not to have scorn'd me!
 Good Heaven! that reason should give madness way,
 'I'll man finds musick in a rattling dice-box!
 And has contracted thrice three thousand acres,
 To the curs'd compacts of a narrow table!
 With what a thoughtless rapture have I shook 'em!
 Hung o'er the throw! and hur'd out my posterity,
 Rump, thieves, or beggars!—But then at last,
 This madman's hazard! of my treasure's remnant,
 In the wild lottery of a publick hope,

Where reason had no chance, and villains govern'd,
 Curs'd his groundless, rashness!—Tear me limb
 from limb,

Some pitying tortures! to die at once,
 Were comfort even in agony!—But I shall be
 Whole ages, after death, in dying—Villains,
 Dull, pitiless, insulting, dirty villains,
 Will point at some poor ragged child of mine,
 And say, "There's pride and name! There's Bell-
 mour's honour!"

There's the blest remnant of a boasted family!"
 Curse the keen thought! It pours all hell upon me!

Louisa. Still wilt thou, thus, snatch at despair's
 wild shadows?

I thought, the manly soul cou'd smile at anguish;
 Woman's weak mind may bend beneath adversity;
 But Bellmour's brow, methinks, thou'd wear a ma-
 jesty,

And make affliction awful.

Bell. Away with counsel.

I cannot hear thee! Thy moving airs! Thy wisdom!
 That lovely softness, which bewitches round thee!
 Each charm, which has a thousand times appear'd me,
 Now makes me mad! Like oil, pour'd out on flame,
 I tower, in blaze, and burn with tenfold fierceness.
 Thy ev'ry word is death! each look thou giv'st me
 Breaks thro' my eye, comes rushing on my soul,
 And shoots sharp arrows thro' my bleeding con-
 science.

Think'st thou, I am so mean, so lost a wretch,
 That my own misery stings me? Cruel woman!
 What earthly ill can Bellmour stoop to fear,
 Which hurt but Bellmour? 'Tis true, indeed, thy
 fate

I have not learn'd to bear—there, grief unmans me;
 Thine and thy helpless infants woes rise to me,
 Glare on my apprehension, like pale ghosts,
 And point me into madness!—Oh! I've wrong'd
 thee!

Louisa. 'Tis wronging me to say it.

Re-enter Courtney.

'Bell. Courtney return'd to soon!

I like not this.

Louisa. Why look you pale, good uncle? [ed,
Court. To bring unwelcome tidings to the wretch-
 Gives the sad teller half the hearer's woe.

Bell. Friendly preparative! what follows next
 Can be but Woody's ruin!

Court. He's undone!

Louisa. Unhappy Bellmour!

Court. Near your house I met him,
 Hemm'd by a swarthy guard of licens'd villains,
 The law's grim blood-hounds. With rapacious
 talons,

They dragg'd him on, in merciless serenity,
 To shut him from his hopes in joyless prison!

Bell. Oh!

Court. At short distance, near the sycamore,
 That marks the turning to that now-fall'n house
 Of this poor gentleman, I saw his lady,
 Wild, with a storm of grief! her hair dishevell'd!
 And her loose robes, blown, careless, by the wind!
 Struggling with weeping servants, to break free.
 Fain wou'd she follow him, to share restraint:
 But, by superior force, held back, and hindered,
 With straining eyes, she kept him long in view;
 And, when a gushing flood obscur'd her sight,
 Still more to lengthen out a last, sad look,
 She wip'd away the tears, and gaz'd again!

Louisa. Dreadful description!—Close it here,
 good uncle!

It cuts too deep, and wounds my Bellmour's soul.

Court. No more remains to tell, but, that his house

Is fill'd with ruffians, his rich goods torn down,
And his griev'd wife and children roam upshelter'd,
Without a home to succour them.

Louisa. O guide them hither.

Let me, with open arms, fly to receive them,
And strive, if possible, to give them comfort.

Bell. Louisa!—As thou wouldst preserve my life,
Bring not their grief too near me.—My melting
Flows into air, as I but hear their misery: [soul
To see it wou'd distract me.—Said he nothing?

Court. Marking me, as I turn'd my face aside,
He call'd, and counsell'd you to save yourself
By sudden flight:—since other ruffians, brought
By Bargrave, your malicious creditor,
Will presently be here, on the same purpose.
As for my fate, said he, bid him not mourn it:
To fall for Bellmour wou'd have given me joy,
Had Bellmour's self not fall'n.

Bell. He falls, indeed!

Court. Now, as I enter'd, Bargrave, just arriv'd,
With his infernal crew beset your gates.
A barbarous triumph glows on his proud cheek,
And from beneath his brows o'erjutting lour,
Malicious insults grin, in hollow ambush!

Louisa. Now, Bellmour! thou art lost!—imme-
diate ruin

Will swallow thee and me, and our dear children!
All! all! must sink together. Teach us, good uncle!
Which way to fly—what measures to pursue.

Court. The doors, fast barr'd, are guarded by
your servants;

And you may thro' the grove escape unseen.

Bell. No!—let him enter.—This Bargrave taught
me vice,

And counsell'd even the adventure that undoes me!
He wrongs the devil, who makes himself the
punisher

Of ills, which he excited! Justice acts wisely!
Oh! She's not blind.—She chuses a fit moment,
And throws him on my vengeance. Let him enter.
Bring he as many lives, as he has crimes,
May curses catch me, if he scape my hand!

Louisa. As thou lov'st me Bellmour! be not rash.
Should'st thou add murder to our other woes,
How wretched shou'd we be?

Court. Persuade him rather,
Soothe him to pity. Wou'd he free your friend,
And add some weeks of liberty, for trial,
What succour may be found; you've many friends:
Who knows what unhop'd aid may rise to save you?

Bell. No, Courtney! friendship rises but with
fortune; [you]

And sets when men go downward. Yet, I thank
Rage had obscur'd my reason.—Say, to Bargrave,
I have an offer for his private ear.

I will instruct my swelling indignation,
To cool, and settle, like a courtier's passions.
What cannot interest teach us? [Exit Courtney.]

Leave me, Louisa!
I wou'd not have thee blast thy innocent eyes,
With sight of such a monster.—Nor brook I, well,
That thou, who hast been taught to love sincerity,
Shou'dst hear me flatter infamy!

Louisa. Do but think [cour,
'Tis for their sakes, whom most you wish to suc-
And you will find it easy. Farewell! he comes.

[Exit Louisa.]

Enter Bargrave.

Barg. So Sir! I find you make your house your
garrison!
Bold four-fac'd centinels admit, with caution,
Whom you vouchsafe your pass to.—'Tis great,
indeed!

Girt, sovereign-like, within your palace walls,
The law must beg admission! But, the pride,
With which your state looks on me, will instruct
Till I find means to reach you.

Bell. I sent not for you, to bid me, [me,
Thus to revive old hatred.—'Twas my meaning,
To set before your eyes the spreading misery,
From which a week's short respite may, perhaps,
Free Woodly, and myself, nor do you wrong.

Barg. Oh, Sir! no doubt, 'tis likely, that seven
days,

Will pay a bond, which twice seven months and
more

Has drawn no interest from you! Woodly may claim
Some little pity.—He's a suffering tool,

Who falls to feed your riots. But for you,
No plea bears influence. What a mass of wealth
Loaded your youth! The toil of careful ancestors!
And how it is consum'd let thousands tell,
Whose lifted eyes and hands proclaim their wonder.
I dare not whisper it!—Men wou'd think me mad:
And laugh to hear, that the once liberal Bellmour
Is grown a niggard now; and, like a miser,
Whines for a day of grace—and swears 'twill
ruin him

To pay his creditors.—Name it no more.—
Should it get wind, 'twou'd lower your tow'ring
toppails,

And lose you many a cap, and country shout,
As you ride thro' the villages.

Bell. Insulting wretch!

It grates my inmost soul to suffer this,
But my friend's fate depends on't.—You seem'd
to speak

As if you pity'd Woodly.—Give him liberty;
And let me fill the place to which you've sent him:
I ask no more.—For my own miseries,
Perhaps they merit not.—I'm sure they scorn
What pity thou can't give them.

Barg. Oft, I remember,
Woodly, with zeal for holy texts, transported,
Wou'd preach, and cite divinity.—Dull! dull!
How cou'd he miss that caution, which forbade him
To be another's surety? What comes after,
He now, perhaps, has learnt.—And will re-
When next he talks to edify. [member,

Bell. Nay, then,
Oft, mean hypocrisy! I'll make thee hear me,
In words, which match thy malice. Think, low
traitor!

How I first learn'd that guilt, with which, but now,
Thy tongue reproach'd me! Who but the villain
Bargrave?

Barg. Ha! villain! said you? [Offering to draw.

Bell. Yes, the villain Bargrave.—Should'st thou unsheath
it here,

Thy guardian devil, too weak to save his minister,
Should rise, in vain, betwixt us!

Barg. I'll hear thee out,

Bell. Who, but thyself, spread all those snares
about me,

Which, first entangling, next o'erthrew my virtue?
Who stain'd the native whiteness of my soul,
And spotted it with follies? Think, how this bond,
Was fraudulently, and, by shameful arts, and
Won from my clouded reason! when the fumes,
Of madding wine, had warm'd my yielding fancy,
Fit for a knave's impression!—Hast thou humanity?
And dost not feel a ruin thou hast caus'd?
Hast thou reflection? and canst thou sleep in slumber,
By guilty startings, and remorseful dreams,
Or have the fiends, that haunt thy guilty bosom,

6 THE FATAL EXTRAVAGANCE.

Unhumanis'd thy heart? fear'd up thy conscience?
And left all devil within thee?

Barb. Now take breath:

And hear me tell the effect of this fine pleading.
I find myself, with all these black endowments,
Your master, and your scourge.—But that I scorn
thee,

I could be angry.—Mark this silent witness:
Look on this bond.—And curse the woeful hour,
That gave thy friend, and thee, to my disposal.
I'll leave our wives to scold the quarrel out;
While I seek vengeance, not from words but action.

[*He attempts to go out.*]

Bell. By action! didst thou say? I thank thee,
Bargrave!

Thou hast instructed me.—That fatal bond
Shall never rise in judgment against Woody.

[*Drawing his sword, and putting himself before the door.*]

Just Heav'n, that hates oppression, points a way,
To ease my wretchedness of half its load,
By cutting thro' that chain, that binds my friend.
Now if thou can'st defend thy villainies,
Unsheath thy sword, and to this guarded door
Force thy wish'd passage thro' the breast of Bell-
mour.

[*They fight, and Bargrave falls.*]

Barb. Curses consume that all-destroying hand!
'Spite of my wish'd revenge, thou wilt escape me.
No heir survives to put the bond in proof,
And Woody, and thyself, are free again. [*He dies.*]
Enter Courtney, surpris'd; and Louisa, at another door.

Court. What have you done? I fear'd this rash
effect

Of rage, but half suppress'd; and waited near.
But an attempt, yon blood-hounds made without,
To force an entrance, call'd me off too fatally!

Louisa. Was this, my Bellmour! speak, was this
the way,

To ease our wretchedness? Oh! this black chance,
Sinks us still deeper, cuts us off from comfort,
And we can never, now, be happy more!

Bell. Courtney! 'twere vain to wish this act
undone.

Scarce can it claim repentance.—Secret and sudden,
Let me entreat thee to convey this parchment

[*Taking the bond from Bargrave's pocket.*]
Into my Woody's hand.—Say how it happen'd:
Tell him, whatever fate may do with me,
I'm blest'd to give him freedom.

Court. Guard the doors well.—There's danger
near;

And I'll not leave you long. [*Exit Courtney.*]

Louisa. Fly! for Heaven's sake, begone.
One hour's delay prevents escape for ever.

Bell. What wouldst thou have me do?

Louisa. Let me disguise thee—
Then thro' the grove, haste; and, in some poor
cottage,

Entreat a short concealment.—There I'll find thee,
And we'll consult relief from all our woes.

Bell. Fix'd as my fate, I stand, unmov'd, to ex-
I'll stir not hence, by Heav'n! [*peet it.*]

Louisa. Oh! do not swear!

Think how my peace of mind, my hope, my misery,
Depends on thine.—Thus on my knees I urge it.
Thou, being free, may'st find a thousand ways
To succour us; but if thou fall'st, a family,
A lost! a friendless family! falls with thee.

Oh! if I ever was belov'd by Bellmour,
If all my prayers, my vows, my tears, can move him,
Let him but grant me this.—Let him but leave me,
Rain then a world of woes upon my head!

Let want, reproach, contempt, and all life's agonies;
In ceaseless bitterness of soul, afflict me!
While thou art safe, if I but let one sigh,
One breath of discontent escape my lips,
Curse me thyself, and make me lost indeed.

Bell. Excellent woman!—rise.—To see thee thus
Is torture beyond bearing!

Louisa. I will not leave thee.—
Here at thy feet, thus humbled, as that dust,
Which I shall shortly be, when I have lost thee,
Here will I grow for ever, 'till thou grant'st
This only pray'r I make thee.

Bell. Thou bidst me fly:
What would'st thou I should fly from?

Louisa. Danger and misery.

Bell. With whom then must I leave that misery?
Must not thyself, and those three friendless wretches,
Whose being I was cause of, and who expect
Aid and protection from a parent's hand;
While I escape, must you not all be left?
Hell glows in that hot thought! be left, expos'd
To all the miseries, which thou would'st have me
Fly, like a coward, from, and leave for innocents,
Who owe 'em to my baseness! No!—my Louisa,
Wretch, as I have been, I'm not fall'n so low!

Louisa. [*Rising.*] Lost, lost, for ever!

Bell. No, there's a Judge on high, [thee,
Who sees, and loves thy goodness.—Let me entreat
To give my sorrows way for a few moments.
A solitary thought, a turn or two,
Uninterrupted in the gallery,
Will teach me to resolve, and then I'll call thee.

[*Exit Bellmour.*]

Louisa. Angels assist and guide thy silent rea-
sonings,

And, from this labyrinth of woes, unwind thee!
Dismal our prospect! yet all may be well!
Heav'n cannot err—oft guides us in the dark—
And, when we least expect, affords relief.
As thro' black storms of wind, and driving rain,
Short sunny beamings streak the harral'd main;
So, thro' deep sorrows, gleams of comfort rise,
And spread smooth heavens before the sufferers' eyes.

[*Exit Louisa.*]

SCENE changes to a Gallery.

Enter Bellmour, alone, pensive.

Bell. Why should I pause! nothing can be a crime
Which puts a stop to evil. A thousand men
May have been poor as I—and yet liv'd happy!
Miseries, we make ourselves, are borne with ease;
But he, who begs his posterity,
Begets a race to curse him—profuse in ills,
He, propagating ruin with his name,
Entails descent of anguish!—Every scorn,
Which wrings the soul of any future Bellmour,
Whom want shall pinch the bones of, ages hence,
Will mark, with shame, my forgotten grave,
And teach my guilty soul, where'er it wanders,
—If to give misery to those, to whom

We once gave life, is an inhuman crime,
How can it be a sin, to take life back,
And put an end to misery? To live,
Is to be rack'd, if life must still be poor!
For poverty gives up the wife man's worth
To the contempt of tasteless ignorance.

Oh!—could I feel no misery but my own!
How easy were it for this sword to free me,
From all that anguish which embitters life!
But, when the grave has given my sorrows rest,
Where shall my miserable wife find comfort?
Unfriended, and alone, in want's bleak storm,
Not all the angelic virtues of her mind
Will shield her from the unpitied world's derision.

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Can it be kind to leave her so expos'd,
 And, while I sleep in death, not dream of her?
 Better a thousand times, to lead her with me,
 Thro' the dark doubtfulness of deep futurity!
 Whate'er uncertain fate attends hereafter,
 It can but be the worst of what is bad,
 And that's our state already.—It shall be done!
 But how? that asks some thought—death, in it,
 Comes soft, and sweetly, as an infant's sleep, [self,
 When nature, unalarm'd, expects it not.
 From those dear, destin'd breasts, the pointed steel
 Must draw no blood, to stain my blushing hand;
 Left my soul start, and that seem cruelty,
 Which I wou'd rain think pity.—Hark! the
 time presses me. [Loud knocking without.

What if I use th' unwounding aid of poison?
 I have at hand that sovereign remedy,
 For all diseases want and woe can plague with.
 Mix'd with some unfeard draught 'twill gently
 murder;
 Bear off death's painful edge, and, in sweet slumber,
 Swim fort, and shadowy, o'er the misty eye-ball.

Enter Louisa.

Louisa. Will you forgive me, if officious love,
 That anxious pain I feel, till you are safe,
 Obtrudes my zeal, perhaps a few short moments,
 Before you wou'd have wish'd to be disturb'd?
 Yon villains grow impatient for admission, [them.
 And scarce your servants guard the gates against
 Storms of bold oaths, and horrible reproaches.
 Mix'd with loud thunderings, and the threats of law,
 Make my heart tremble, and have forc'd me hither,
 Forc'd me to urge you, by all ties of love,
 Of interest, honour, hope, and future happiness,
 To fly this dangerous roof, and save us all.

Bell. I thank thy gentle care.—It is resolv'd.
 I have bethought me of a means to evade
 The malice of my fortune.—'Twill be a journey,
 A little longer than thy love could wish it;
 Yet not so far, but we shall meet again.

Louisa. Oh! be the distance wide, as pole from
 Let me but follow thee, and I am blest'd. [pole,

Bell. It shall be so, Louisa.

Louisa. A thousand angels
 Spread their wings o'er thee, and protect thy steps.
 Now thou art kind!—But the dear little ones,
 Shall they go too?

Bell. All! all! shall go!

Louisa. Haste then,
 Let us be gone—my bounding heart leaps joyful,
 And I shall smile again—But ah me, Bellmour!
 They are so young! so tender! is it possible,
 That they should travel with us?

Bell. Moving innocence!
 My strong heart bleeds within me at her accents!

[Aside.
 A few short steps will lodge us in a place [To her.
 Of rest and safety—we shall have leisure there
 To weigh our future hopes, and seek fit means,
 To our wish'd end.—Courtney will soon return;
 Said he not so?

Louisa. He did, and we'll inform him
 Of our new purpose, and begin our flight.
 I'll make provision, such as best befits
 Our haste, and our distresses. [She is going.

Bell. Stay, Louisa!
 Those boasted cordials, the French marquis sent me,
 Gave I to thee, or no?

Louisa. You spoke of such—
 But still forgot to give 'em me—and now,
 They're not worth memory.

Bell. Nay, now, most useful!

Their virtue is reported sovereign
 Against the body's toil, or mind's disturbance.
 Louisa. Wou'd Courtney were come. [Exit.
 Enter Courtney alone.

Court. Strange! that a man should linger thus in
 The pointed sword, that, by a slender hair, [peril!
 Hung o'er the head of Damocles, was shadow
 To Bellmour's solid danger.—I was told
 He walks this way—I'll trace the gallery round,
 And urge him to escape—Few minutes more
 May spread a crowd of eyes on every side,
 And fatally prevent him. [Exit.

Re-enter Bellmour.

Bell. My baleful hand has mix'd the deadly
 To give it as a corioal—Give it! whom? [draught,
 Start from thy burning orb, thou conscious fun,
 And chill thyself to frost at my black purpose.
 Am I a parent? a protector? lover?
 Or has this devil, that heaves about my heart,
 Transform'd me to a fiend? He has! he has!
 Chain him, some angel, millions of fathoms down;
 Heap him with mountains, lest he rise again,
 And in a husband's and a father's breast
 Brew horrid murders!—I am myself once more—
 Now let cool reason's undistracted search
 Answer my bleeding soul, which dreadful ill
 May best be borne by nature—To leave our friends,
 To grinding sorrow, poverty and scorn,
 With sense of his not feeling any pain,
 Who gave them all;—or, to quit life together,
 And, wanting pow'r to bless, make it some merit,
 Not to leave curses to surviving innocence!
 I'm mad again—Reason herself betrays me,
 And whispers, that this last is cruelty,
 And murder grows a mercy—

Enter Louisa.

Louisa. Found you the cordial?
 Your little wanderers are ready dress'd
 To act the pilgrim with us; perhaps 'twill aid
 Their fainting spirits, yet untried in hardships.

Bell. I cannot move—my feet, bound down by
 nature,

Rebel against my heart.—Oh! if one moment,
 One short thought longer, she oppress me thus,
 With melting, innocent talk—I shall grow soft,
 Yield her to want, and live to be a beggar.

Louisa. Still you are doubtful—

Bell. No—no—I'm fix'd—Oh! Nature! [Aside.
 I left my closet open—on a table,
 In that gold cup, which was thy father's present,
 When thy first favourite boy's last birth-day came,
 Thou'lt find the fittest cordial—I try'd 'em all,
 And what seem'd properest for the boys and thee,
 Waits, in that cup, thy tasting.

Louisa. Courtney stays long—
 All things are ready, and I wish him here.
 Now for this boasted cordial. [Exit.

Bell. Be firm, my heart!
 Stop thy big beat! Thaw, thaw, this curdling blood,
 That, thro' my icy veins, creeps, cold as death,
 And freezes in it's passage.—Where is Louisa?
 But a few moments, and she is no more!
 Now! now! the unsuspecting innocent
 Lifts that last cup—Now, now, she tastes a draught,
 That snatches her, for ever, from my sight,
 And robs me of her comfort! Never more,
 Shall her sweet voice enchant me! Never more,
 Shall her soft eyes look fondly into mine,
 And shine with swimming liquor—Never, never,
 Will her unwearied wit beguile my cares,
 Or hush me more to peace, when passion shakes me!
 Open, engulf me, and conceal my shame!

Befriending earth!—Or, from thy yawning depth,
Stream up a night of gloom, to blot out memory,
And darken o'er reflection!—I feel my blood
Cool, and grow thick, as melted lead flows heavy,
And hardens in its motion—A little longer,
And I, who have a heart already marble,
Shall petrify throughout, and be a statue!

Louisa. [Within.] My life! my Bellmour!

Bell. Ha! 'tis her voice that calls me—

It sounded not reproachful.

Louisa. [Within.] Look, look, my Bellmour!

These little strugglers will not quit the cordial,
But sip it to the bottom.

Bell. Tortur'g horror!

Enter Louisa, with an empty Cup.

Louisa. How could you be so rigid, not to come,
When I twice call'd you? 'Twould have been a scene
Of pleasure, to observe with how much eagerness
The little wranglers quarrell'd for the cup,
Which, having drank myself, I brought to them.
I bid 'em taste it only—and told the prattlers,
It was their father's present: but that word
Transported them to lift their pretty hands,
And brought a war about me.

Bell. Furies tear me!— [taste it?]

Louisa. Did you not give permission they should
Ere they began the journey!

Bell. Alas! Louisa!

A long, long journey is, indeed! begun,
But endless as eternity—Thyself, [dial.]

And those dear infants—are poison'd by that cord!
Louisa. Poison'd! by thee? thou say'st it but to
try me!

If 'twere thy wish that I should die, my love,
At least thy pity wou'd have given some warning.
Death is a dreadful journey, and requires
Much length of preparation.

Bell. By those charms,
Which I no more must gaze on, and be blest'd,
Thou can't not live an hour—A last, long sleep
Will steal, in cold advances, o'er thy beauties,
And those two beamy funs, which, sparkle on me,
Anon shall set in death—E'en, while we talk,
The eternal shade will rise, at once, between us,
And sever us for ever.

Louisa. Dreadful contraction!

Of that short span, which, at it's longest stretch,
Was much too narrow to allow me scope
To speak, or look, or think, my love, for thee:
What shall I say?—A thousand tender thoughts
Struggle, at once, for vent.—I cannot speak—
Death is too hasty.—I have yet undone,
Unspoke, unthought, a thousand weighty things!
O! Heaven! my little ones!—Let me fly to them!
Have I so short a time to gaze upon them?
Yet ne'er must see 'em more;—I cannot leave thee.
What shall I do?—O bring my children hither!
Fly with 'em to my arms!—Dear, dying, inno-
cent! [done?]

Oh! Bellmour! Bellmour! Why has this been

Bell. That we might baffle woe, and die to-
gether—

And leave no beggars of our race behind us.
See! my Louisa! I have a faithful guide,
That will not let me lose thee.

[Drawing a dagger, stabs himself.]

Louisa. Oh! cruel Bellmour!

What hast thou done?—Now, I am kill'd indeed!
Help, help!—O, Uncle! what a dreadful scene
Are you return'd to?

Enter Courtney.

Court. I have heard it all—

And had not that conceal'd, undreamt of dagger,
Prevented my near vigilance, had sav'd
Unhappy Bellmour.—

Bell. Not unhappy now.

We slide, united, from the woes of life,
And want's too slow to reach us.

Court. Mistaken man!

The hand of Heaven, howe'er, from mortal eyes
Obscur'd in clouds, still points direct to justice!
Not thy three children, nor thy guiltless wife,
But thou, alone, art fallen! whose single crime
Drew down a single vengeance!

Louisa. Alas! what mean you?

Bell. Thou little know'st the deadly means I us'd,
If thou conceiv'st me frustrated.—

Court. Hear, then, with wonder— [dence.]

And, trembling, mark the mazy paths of Provi-
Seeking you on the gallery's garden side,
I, in your closet, spy'd a late fill'd cup,
With a small phial near it.—To the neck
There hung a label.—By the name, inscrib'd,
I saw, with sad surprise, it had held poison.
Concluding you had newly mingled it,

With that rich draught it flood by—From a window,
I threw it on the garden—refill'd the cup,
Without its deadly mixture—and flood, conceal'd,
To watch what happen'd—when Louisa came,
And snatch'd it thence, I follow'd her, unmark'd,
Pleas'd to have been a means, to intercept
Her's, and her children's death.—The rest you
know too well. [gilance,

Bell. Angels surround thee, with unceasing vi-
And, for this friendship, ward off every evil.
Oh! I have err'd—

Louisa. Oh! too, too, partial blessing!
Faint sweet! with more than poisonous bitter
mix'd!

Now Bellmour! tell me—was it not a crime
To distrust heav'n? Else thou hadst liv'd—and
then

We had all, perhaps, been blest'd.

Court. You had, indeed!

By a young Kinsman, landed, from a ship,
That left her comfort scarce a day behind,
Woodly has heard surprising news—your brother,
Absent, so many years, and long thought dead,
Returning, rich, from the remotest east,
Dy'd but in sight of land, and has bequeath'd
His whole heap'd wealth to Bellmour.

Bell. Heaven! I adore thee!

Would I had trusted thy eternal wisdom!
Thou best canst clear thy mystic dispensations,
And make confusion end in beauteous order.
Oh, thou art just! and dreadful is thy conduct:
Punish'd, with this severity of justice,
I feel, and own, thy mercy—Now live, Louisa!
Live, and be happy—and forget—thy Bellmour.

[Dies.]

Louisa. Oh!

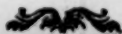
[She swoons.]

Court. Alas! she faints—This sudden turn of
terror

Rushes too strong to be withstood by nature.
I'll call her women to her aid, and watch her,
'Till time and thought, by slow degrees, bring
comfort.

From this said story let observers know,
That early riot ends in lasting woe.
Mean and ignoble pleasures break the mind,
Unnerve our judgment, and our reason blind,
'Till Heav'n o'er-takes us with some dreadful
fate,

And the touch'd soul grows sensible, too late.



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